IV. FIRE AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

A. PROFILE

Overview

The Fire and Building Department serves the City of Kirkland by providing emergency response services, permit and plan review, inspections, fire prevention services and emergency management. The primary focus of this section of the report is the Department's role in the enforcement of City adopted Building Codes and State Mandated Regulations. Comments on the Fire related aspects will be included as appropriate. All jurisdictions in Washington must enforce the minimum construction standards adopted by the State but have the option of adopting additional local amendments that are at least as restrictive as the State Codes. Kirkland has traditionally avoided adopting numerous amendments to the building codes.

Authority

Chapter 19.27 Revised Code of Washington (RCW) establishes the State Building Code and identifies the conditions under which a local jurisdiction may amend the state building code. Kirkland Municipal Code Chapter 21 adopts the state building code which references the 2009 edition of the following codes along with minor state and local adopted amendments.

- (1) 2009 International Building Code—Chapter 51-50 WAC;
- (2) 2009 International Residential Code—Chapter 51-51 WAC;
- (3) 2009 International Mechanical Code—Chapter 51-52 WAC;
- (4) 2009 National Fuel Gas Code (NFPA 54)—Chapter 51-52 WAC;
- (5) Kirkland Electrical Code;
- (6) 2008 Liquefied Petroleum Gas Code (NFPA 58)—Chapter 51-52 WAC;
- (7) 2009 International Fuel Gas Code—Chapter 51-52 WAC;
- (8) 2009 Uniform Plumbing Code—Chapters 51-56 and 51-57 WAC. (Ord. 4246 § 1 (part), 2010: Ord. 4208
- § 2 (part), 2009: Ord. 4099 § 2 (part), 2007: Ord. 4017 § 2, 2005: Ord. 3946 § 1 (part), 2004)
- (9) 2009 International Fire Code- Chapters 51-54 WAC

Basic Functions

The Fire and Building Department employs 112 employees in a diverse range of activities. This section of the report will focus attention primarily on the activities of the Building Division and the Fire Prevention Bureau as those groups support the overall development review and inspection process. This process is designed to protect the public and property by ensuring that the minimum fire, health and life safety standards are incorporated into all new construction. This is achieved by working in cooperation with other Departments including Planning and Public Works.

In addition, the staff works daily with members of the commercial development community and homeowners to identify and resolve construction code related deficiencies.

Organization

The Fire and Building Department is under the overall coordination and management of the Director of Fire and Building who reports directly to the City Manager. The Building Division is managed by the Building Services Manager who performs the functions of the local Building Official and reports directly to the Director of Fire and Building. The Fire Prevention Bureau provides support through plan review and inspection of new construction and is supervised by the Fire Marshal who reports to the Deputy Fire Chief of Administration. There are currently nineteen (19) employees (18.28 FTEs) within the Building Division and four (4) employees in the Fire Prevention Bureau for a total of 22.28 FTEs as shown in Figure 7 and Table 6. The City's budget document shows 21.28 for 2011-2012 and 21.78 for 2013-2014. Of the four and a half (4.5) employees in the Fire Prevention Bureau, only the Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshal and the Fire Inspector have responsibilities that are primarily related to activities in development services.

Fire & Building Director Fire Chief Assistant Fire Chief/ **Building Official** Admin Inspection Permit Tech Plan Review Fire Marshal Supervisor Supervisor Supervisor Assistant Fire Elec/Bldg Plans Examiner II Permit Tech Inspector Marshal Deputy Fire Elec/Bldg Plans Examiner II Permit Tech Marshal Inspector Elec/Bldg Permit Tech Fire Inspector Plans Examiner II Inspector .74 Office Elec/Bldg Permit Tech Plans Examiner I Technician Inspector .54 .5 Plans Examiner II Bldg Inspector Permit Tech (Currently Vacant)

Figure 7
Fire and Building Department Organization

Office Tech (temporary)

Table 6 Building Division Staffing

	# of Positions	
Classification	(FTEs)	Responsibility
Building Official	1	Oversees the building functions for plan review, building permit counter and inspections, Reports to Fire Chief
Inspection Supervisor	1	Supervises Combination Inspector staff and performs electrical plan reviews. Reports to Building Official
Elect/Building Inspector	4	Performs electrical, building, plumbing, mechanical inspections and performs electrical plan reviews. Reports to Inspections Supervisor
Building Inspector	1.0	Performs building inspections. Reports to Inspections Supervisor
Plan Review Supervisor	1	Supervises Plan Examiners by assigning projects and monitoring completion. Reports to Building Official
Plans Examiner II	4	Performs plan reviews of commercial and residential building plans and coordinates plan correction letters. Reports to Plan Review Supervisor
Plans Examiner I	1	Performs residential and small commercial building plan reviews and coordinates plan correction letters. Reports to Plan Review Supervisor
Permit Technician Supervisor	1	A working supervisor position providing counter support 75% and overseeing work of Permit Technicians. Reports to Building Official.
Permit Technician	3.28 *	Performs plan intake function, establishes fees and issues permits. Reports to Permit Technician Supervisor
Building Office Technician	1	Provides administrative support services to Building Division, initial contact with customers for Building, Reports to Permit Technician Supervisor
Total FTE's	18.28	

56

^{*}Plus one temporary Permit Technician

Table 7
Fire Prevention Bureau Staffing

Classification	# of Positions (FTEs)	Responsibility
Classification	(FTLS)	Provides direct oversight of Fire Prevention
		Bureau, performs fire plan reviews for new
Fire Marshal	1	construction. Reports to Deputy Fire Chief/Administration.
Assistant Fire Marshall	1	Directly supervises fire inspection staff, trains engine companies to ensure inspections are performed correctly, inspects fire protection systems and conducts fire investigations. Reports to Fire Marshal.
Deputy Fire Marshal	1	Performs fire and life safety inspections for new construction and investigates fires. Reports to Assistant Fire Marshal
Fire Inspector	1	Performs fire and life safety inspections and conducts fire investigations. Reports to reports to Assistant Fire Marshal.
Fire Office Technician	0.5	Provides administrative support services to Fire Division, initial contact with customers for Fire permits. Reports to Deputy Fire Chief/Administration
Total	4.5	

B. Positive Findings/Areas of Strength

- Department offers and encourages Electronic Plan Review using Bluebeam software for markups.
- Staff actively participates in local and regional EnerGov User Groups to coordinate software improvements.
- The Building Division utilizes combination inspectors to improve efficiency.
- The Development Review Committee II concept brings various managers together to review and improve development review policies and regulations.
- The highly successful MyBuildingPermits.com program is to be further expanded to all permit types in May, 2013.

- The Department strives to minimize local amendments to State mandated Building Codes in order to enhance consistent interpretations among regional jurisdictions.
- Building and Fire Staff actively participate in Annual Washington Association of Building Official (WABO) Education Week.
- Department is actively beginning steps to adopt most current new Building Codes in July, 2013.
- Fire has an active Engine Company Fire Prevention Inspection Program with technical support provided by Fire Prevention Bureau staff.
- City reimburses staff for all training and recertification costs.
- Building Official confers with Industry on proposed code changes prior to adoption.

C. Organizational Issues

Building Division Management

The Building Services Manager (Building Official) oversees the operations of the Building Plan Review, Building Inspections and Permit Counter to assure all construction within the City complies with all Building Codes and Ordinances related to construction. The Building Official has over 16 years' experience in enforcing building code requirements and has been the Building Official for the City of Kirkland for the 6½ years. He is well respected by staff and has received recognition on a regional basis as the local Building Official of the Year.

The Building Official actively participates in regional and state building official association activities that bring a direct benefit to the City of Kirkland. The Building Official's participation on the regional MyBuildingPermit.com committee has helped keep Kirkland among the leaders in the field of on-line permit processing and his participation on technical advisory committees has helped shape the language in the state building codes. The Building Official also participates as a member of the local and regional EnerGov User Group, a group that coordinates efforts to provide direction to the suppliers of the EnerGov software.

In addition to concerns about adequate staffing and budget, a major challenge facing the Building Official at this time is overcoming the numerous significant problems created by the implementation of the new EnerGov permitting software program. The program has not performed up to expectations, with some of the features from the previous program being unavailable or very cumbersome to utilize. The impacts are significant and affect every aspect of his Division's operations. Staff at every level has been forced to spend significantly more time entering information into the systems and correcting errors that the system generates. These additional

responsibilities have diminished the amount of time available to perform staff's core functions such as conducting field inspections, completing plan reviews and issuing building permits. The EnerGov system also does not currently provide the type of detailed activity reporting that was previously available from the Tidemark Advantage System. Allocating resources to address this major challenge should be a top priority for the Department.

47. Recommendation: The Building Official should continue to participate in local and regional EnerGov User Group meetings to pressure the software provider to resolve the current deficiencies in the permit software.

Business Cards

Staff routinely assigned to perform field inspections, including Building and Fire Inspectors, frequently need to contact customers in advance of inspections and likewise customers have a need to contact inspectors to coordinate field inspection times. When the City provides an inspector with a cell phone, that phone number should be included on the inspector's business card. This practice is only being partially implemented at this time.

48. Recommendation: As new business cards are ordered for Fire and Building Inspectors they should be modified to include the Inspector's City cell phone number.

Communications

Staff involved in development services has been recently subjected to a significant amount of change as a result of the implementation of several new programs or significant changes to existing programs. These programs include EnerGov, On-Line Plan Review, Expanded MyBuildingPermit.com, New World Fire Inspection Tracking and GIS. While implementation of new programs is encouraged and inevitable, the methods used to introduce these changes can have a significant effect on the success of the program. Staff interviews revealed considerable frustration with the methods used to implement several of these new programs based primarily on poor communication during the process. Complaints included failure to be consulted on proposed "enhancements" to the system prior to implementation, lack of notification to all staff when procedures have been changed, lack of procedure manuals and an inconsistent process in notifying staff of process changes.

49. Recommendation: The Development Review Committee II should establish a general set of communication guidelines to follow when implementing new programs that help ensure all staff becomes willing and informed participants in the process.

One of the communication devices utilized in the past by the development services departments has been the Development Review Committee (DRC) Manual. A copy of this Manual is maintained on the City's Intranet site (Kirknet) for employee use. A review of this manual suggests that it can provide assistance in addressing some of the communication concerns currently being expressed by staff. The Manual appears well organized and sufficiently detailed to provide genuine assistance to staff; however, it does not appear to have been updated within the last three years and does not adequately cover the new programs that have been implemented.

50. Recommendation: The Development Review Committee should update the DRC Manual currently on the City's intranet site and use it as a consistent method of communicating procedure changes to all staff.

Customer Handouts

Professional builders, as well as homeowners, frequently rely on the availability of informational handouts to assist them in navigating through the permit process and understanding how code provisions are interpreted within the local jurisdiction. The number of customer handouts available at the Fire and Building Department counter and on the City's website is comprehensive. The information is generally well organized and follows a logical sequence in providing information to applicants who are using the system for the first time. However, for frequent users of the system the volume of information to wade through can be onerous. Providing an index that includes each handout would assist those customers seeking a specific piece of information. An Index has been created for all handouts and permit applications; however, it is only accessible on the Kirklandpermits.net site and is not currently linked to the City's main website. In addition, some of the handouts have not been updated to reflect procedural changes such as the implementation of the IVR system through EnerGov.

- **51.** Recommendation: An index list of all available customer handouts should be compiled and made readily available to the public on both the City's main website and at the public counter.
- **52.** Recommendation: All handouts and applications should be periodically updated to reflect current operating procedures.

Our experience has shown that one of the most frequently requested informational handouts are flow charts that helps describe the permit process. Development Process flow charts were created for some of the development processes as part of the implementation of the new EnerGov Permit System, however, this information has not been provided in a format accessible to the customer. Flow charts for all processes are recommended in a previous recommendation.

Department Administration

The Director of Fire and Building is responsible for the overall operation of the Fire and Building Department. Having previous experience in a large Fire Department, the Chief has been with the City of Kirkland for 3½ years during which time he has taken steps to mold the organization to reflect his philosophy. The impacts on the development services functions are primarily reflected in the operations of the Building Division and the Fire Prevention Bureau. As stated elsewhere, the Director of Fire and Building has expressed great confidence in the Building Official and has allowed him a high level of autonomy in running the Building Division. The Director of Fire and Building also acknowledges that the Building Division is funded primarily from building permit related fees and certain restrictions are in place to ensure that the funds from these permits are utilized to support the activities of the Building Division.

The administrative support provided to Fire Administration is under the supervision of the Deputy Fire Chief/Administration. During interviews with various staff members several comments were provided that indicated a general lack of teamwork and accountability among the administrative support staff. Comments generally focused on an unwillingness or inability to cover for other administrative staff members during absences or when high volumes of customer generated work arose at the counter. Comments also reported a lack of written procedures and performance standards for administrative positions. It is our understanding that an Administrative Support Supervisor position is to be filled in the near future to provide additional oversight of the administrative staff.

- 53. Recommendation: The Director of Fire and Building should continue efforts to hire an Administrative Support Supervisor to provide oversight and assistance to the administrative support staff.
- **54.** Recommendation: Upon hiring an Administrative Support Supervisor, the individual should be tasked with the responsibility to establish employee performance standards and create a set of written desk procedures.

Fire Prevention Bureau Management

The Fire Prevention Bureau is supervised by the Fire Marshal who reports to the Deputy Fire Chief/Administration. The current staffing in the Fire Prevention Bureau consists of a combination of sworn and civilian positions. At one point the Fire Prevention Bureau consisted entirely of civilian employees. That trend is now transitioning to a Bureau comprised entirely of sworn personnel as positions become vacant. The current Fire Marshal has been with the City of Kirkland for over 25 years in a civilian position. The role of the Fire Marshal has evolved during that time to become a position that primarily performs plan review services for new construction. The Fire Marshal is considered a tremendous source of knowledge regarding the

application of the Fire Code and is frequently consulted in that capacity. The Job Description of the Fire Marshal position, however, includes numerous other duties that are not currently being addressed by the Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal has suggested that some form of job swap be initiated that would allow her to continue to perform the critical plan review function without the supervisory responsibilities identified in the Fire Marshal Job Description.

55. Recommendation: The Director of Fire and Building should pursue granting the Fire Marshal's request for reassignment to a full-time plans examiner type position and seek candidates to assume the full duties of the Fire Marshal position.

Job Descriptions

Fundamental to providing quality customer service is establishing employee performance standards based on accurate job descriptions. A review of current job descriptions revealed that most descriptions have not been updated for many years and contain references to required certifications from organizations that no longer exist. In addition, some job classifications include minimum educational requirements that current incumbents do not meet. These minimum qualifications should be reviewed to determine if they are still appropriate for the specific position.

56. Recommendation: The City should update Job Descriptions to reflect any desired changes in minimum educational qualification and appropriate changes to reflect the current names of certifying organizations.

The Job Description for the Electrical/Building Inspector position mandates a minimum of five years' experience as a licensed commercial journeyman electrician with the State of Washington Department of Labor and Industries. This appears to be an appropriate minimum State mandated qualification to perform electrical inspections. Kirkland is one of the few jurisdictions in the state that performs its own electrical inspections, other jurisdictions contract with the State to provide these types of inspections. In Kirkland these same inspectors also provide building, plumbing and mechanical inspections, though the job description only requires certification as a Building Inspector within one year of hire. The Electrical/Building Inspectors also perform all electrical plan reviews rather than staff from the Plan Review Section. There is little question that the inspectors are very qualified to perform electrical inspections based on their experience in the trade, however, no such trade experience is required in building, plumbing or mechanical. In reality, it would be very difficult to find any inspector that possessed the equivalent of five years of journeyman experience in each of these trades. Other jurisdictions that utilize "combination" inspectors typically mandate certification from the International Code Council as a

Combination Inspector to reflect their inspector's qualifications in all of the trades they are inspecting.

57. Recommendation: The City should update the Job Description for the Electrical/Building Inspector position to include minimum certification requirements to reflect their assignments to also inspect plumbing and mechanical installations.

Organization

Unlike most jurisdictions, the City of Kirkland has been organized to combine the Fire Department and the Building Department functions into a single Department. Traditionally Building functions have been either a separate department or combined with a Planning Department or a Public Works Department. In recent years the trend has been to combine the development review functions from Planning, Building and Engineering/Public Works into a separate Development Services Department. A variety of arguments can be made in support of each of these models; however, in reviewing the actual operation of the combined Kirkland Fire and Building Department it appears this organizational structure works well at this time. There seems to be a strong working relationship between the Director of Fire and Building and the Building Official based on mutual respect. In addition, there is a very good working relationship between the members of the Fire Prevention Bureau and the Building Division employees. A shared purpose of ensuring appropriate fire and life safety protection for the people of Kirkland has provided a strong bond among this group.

There has been some suggestion that a consolidation of regional fire protection districts may be considered in the future. Under such a scenario it appears unlikely that Kirkland's Building functions would be included in such a consolidation and therefore consideration should be given as to how the Building Division operations would be reorganized. Establishing the Building Division as a separate department or combining development review functions from Building, Planning and PW into a Development Services Department should be considered.

58. Recommendation: The City should continue to operate a combined Fire and Building Department until such time that the Fire Department becomes part of a consolidated regional Fire Department. Upon consolidation, Building should become a Department, be merged with Planning, or be incorporated with specific Planning and Public Works functions into a Development Services Department.

Records Management

The State of Washington establishes a minimum retention schedule for building permits and plans for all jurisdictions. The City of Kirkland currently stores the

original paper copy of plans and permits in a variety of formats that make retrieval difficult and time consuming. It was frequently mentioned that older planning type reports were nearly impossible to retrieve and that recently completed projects are not being filed in a timely manner. The long-term solution should be to digitize and index all documents required to be retained and thereby make them immediately available to staff and the public when the need arises. Digitizing plans will also facilitate future access to these plans and reports via the EnerGov permit software.

59. Recommendation: The City should work with the City Clerk's Office to evaluate and recommend a long-term solution to the records management function as it relates to plans, records and reports that are reviewed as part of the development review process.

Staff Coverage

Frequently during staff interviews the subject of inadequate staff coverage was raised as a source of poor customer service. First-line staff often found it difficult to find technical or administrative staff to assist customers at the counter or to receive phone calls. They attributed this to the extensive use of flex-time and a general lack of coordination of work schedules. This situation can also contribute to a feeling of unfair workload assignments in the eyes of those that don't have the opportunity to participate in flex-time. Other organizations faced with such a challenge have initiated a variety of methods to keep staff informed about the status of individual employees during the course of the workweek. These methods have ranged from simple sign-out white boards to sophisticated computer-based master calendars.

60. Recommendation: The City Manager should review the current flextime program and implement additional measures to keep all staff better informed of the daily status of those participating in the program.

Staffing/Activity Levels

We believe that a variety of activities should be measured in order to evaluate appropriate staffing levels. Table 8 below provides a cross section of activities both currently and historically performed by Building Department staff and the available staff during the same time period.

This table does not include the three (3) FTEs from Fire Prevention Bureau assigned plan review and new construction inspection responsibilities and also does not include the approximate 15 permits/month that are fire protection system only permits issued during those years.

During interviews with the Building Official it was stated that the current staffing level provides the bare minimum necessary to meet the basic plan review, permit processing and inspection responsibilities on a daily basis. Other important tasks such

as tracking expired permits, updating forms and handouts and updating information on the website has had to take a backseat.

The total number of permits issued over the last seven years has fluctuated consistent with the economic downturn. The permit activity levels for 2012 of 4,980 are 22% above the high 2006 year with 4,072 activities. In 2006 staff handled roughly 156.6 activities per staff. In 2012 it is projected to be 263.8 per staff. Thus, the total number of staff available to support the 2012 level of activity is less than that provided during 2006. A closer review of the permit activity data indicates that the current rate of new single family development still lags behind the peak periods of 2006 and 2007 with much of the increase in permit activity being attributed to additions and alterations to existing commercial buildings and a significant increase in minor electrical and mechanical permits. This is only an overview type of analysis since we do not have actual staff time required for each permit type. It is proposed that these numbers be developed as part of the proposed fee study. Nevertheless, the analysis does indicate that there is a probable need for additional staffing, particularly in light of our proposed new performance standards, shorter timelines, and the need to address deferred tasks such as tracking expired permits and updating handouts and the website content.

It is also appropriate to note that the average valuation per permit has decreased which means that staff is generally working on smaller projects. This shift to smaller projects can impact the City in two different ways. First, smaller projects are frequently undertaken by less experienced contractors and homeowners resulting in an increased expectation that the plan review and inspection staff will provide an even higher level of assistance to successfully complete the projects. Secondly, these smaller projects tend to result in additional staff costs that are not fully recovered by existing building permit fees which ultimately results in fewer staff to perform the work unless the fees are adjusted.

Table 8
Building Permit Activity

Туре	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	6 Yr. Ave.
Comm-New	6	12	8	12	2	19	40	9.8
Comm-Adds/Alts	174	172	186	141	181	201	266	175.8
Res – New SFD	232	222	120	44	71	106	173	132.5
Res-SFD Adds/Alts	262	256	252	234	242	248	217	249
Res- New MFD	7	3	0	3	1	1	1	2.5
Res-MFD Adds/Alts **	0	0	0	0	0	108	150	108
Misc – Signs/Grading/Demo/Oth	374	298	232	142	157	159	170	227
Electrical	1397	1360	1169	960	1213	1371	2055	1245
Mechanical	923	924	734	612	780	851	1247	804
Plumbing	697	652	564	372	442	330	661	509.5
Totals	4072	3899	3265	2520	3089	3394	4980	3373.2
Percent Change	-	-4.2	-16.3	-22.8	+22.6	+9.9	+46.7	
Effective FTEs	22.5	22.5	20.78	20.03	15.28	16.28	17.28	
Temporary Positions	3.5	2.5	2.5	0	0	1.6	1.6	
Total FTEs + Temporary	26	25	23.28	20.03	15.28	17.88	18.88	
Total per FTE & Temp.	156.6	159.96	140.2	164.9	202.2	189.9	263.8	168.95

^{*2012} Projected

^{**}Report categories restructured 2011

Evaluating the appropriateness of staffing levels must also consider the overall effectiveness of the staff performing the services. This report contains recommendations to enhance employee performance by establishing performance standards and conducting periodic staff performance audits. However, evaluating employee effectiveness must also consider whether the employees have access to the tools that would allow them to consistently perform at a high level. As stated elsewhere, staff's effectiveness is currently being seriously hampered by the shortcomings of the EnerGov permit software program. Staff from the Building Inspection section report that they spend approximately two hours per day per inspector reconciling the inspection requests and result postings. The time spent daily on these activities is approximately equivalent to a full time position. This is a level of intervention that was not required under the previous software and should be corrected as soon as possible.

Table 9
Inspection Activity

Year	Total Inspections	Avg/Inspection/Day	Inspection FTEs	Avg/Insp/Day/Inspector
2008	15,202	60.1	5	12.0
2009	11,446	46.0	4	11.5
2010	11,119	45.6	4	11.4
2011	11,975	54.8	5	11.0
2012*	15,216	60.1	5	12.0

^{*}Projected

The number of average inspections per day per inspector has generally been a good indicator of overall inspection workload. We recommend that the average number of inspections per day per inspector fall within a range of between 10 and 15 per day. This recommendation assumes the inspectors are focusing all of their attention on conducting field inspections. In the case of Kirkland, there are other considerations that impact the time available for inspection staff to complete their daily inspections. As stated previously, overcoming the current shortcoming of the EnerGov system has reduced the amount of staff time available to complete inspections and could be considered to reduce available inspection staffing equivalent to one full-time position. Factoring this into the current staffing assignments would reduce the available staff to four FTEs and increase the average inspections per day to 14.6. Another factor to be considered is the fact that the Electrical/Building Inspectors are also tasked to perform all plan review responsibilities for electrical installations. Per Washington State Law,

they appear to be the only staff qualified to perform such plan review services. In most communities throughout the country, electrical plan review is performed by qualified plans examiners assigned to the Plan Review Section. This arrangement tends to create efficiencies by allowing a single plan reviewer to check all code requirements at the same time.

The City should be commended for utilizing a combination inspector program that provides greater efficiency than a specialty inspection program and historically using temporary and contract employees to address peak workload situations. We also support the City commitment to provide next business day inspections. The average inspection workload of inspection per day per inspector is approaching the upper limit of our recommendation, however, alternatives should be considered before hiring additional staff.

- **61.** Recommendation: The City should take immediate steps to correct deficiencies in the inspection module of the EnerGov software program in order to allow inspection staff to spend more time conducting field inspections.
- **62.** *Recommendation:* The Building Official should consider transferring the responsibility for electrical plan review to the Plan Review Section.
- **63.** Recommendation: The Building Official should continue to utilize the services of temporary and contract inspection staff to address increased workload.

The Building Division currently has an unfilled Plans Examiner Position that is scheduled to be filled on January 2013. The need for this position was originally identified as a response to the recent annexation. While the Department has been able to generally meet it stated plan review target turnaround times, we believe these targets turnaround times are much too long. As will be discussed in the Plan Review Section of the report, public feedback and best practices indicate these turnaround times should be substantially reduced. It is with the anticipated reduction in target turnaround times that we recommend this vacant Plans Examiner position be filled as scheduled. Consideration should also be given to again utilizing the services of outside consultants to provide plan review services when the revised turnaround times can no longer be met with existing full-time staff.

64. Recommendation: The Building Official should continue his efforts to fill a new budgeted Plans Examiner position in January 2013 in order to respond to a commitment to reduce overall plan review turnaround times.

65. Recommendation: The Building Official should again utilize the resources of outside plan review consultants as necessary to achieve compliance with the new reduced plan review turnaround target times.

Training

Unlike many other municipal services, the building, fire and other related codes adopted by the jurisdiction change frequently, which requires the Building Official to apply constant vigilance to ensure that the most current adopted code provisions are being properly enforced. One of the methods to obtain the needed training on these new codes is through attendance at outside training classes. Technical code classes are made available locally by such organizations as International Code Council (ICC), Washington Association of Building Official (WABO), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO). The City of Kirkland has identified minimum certification requirements in the Job Descriptions for many positions in the Fire and Building Department. Maintaining certifications generally requires obtaining a prescribed number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) every three years. If budget is not available for travel, many of these classes are available on-line from these same organizations. It is appropriate that the City continue to pay for attendance at outside training classes and reimburse staff for the cost of processing their Certification renewals. According to staff, the City has continued to be supportive of most of their efforts to participate in these classes and obtain the necessary Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to maintain their certifications.

- **66.** Recommendation: The City should continue to financially support attendance at local and State code training classes for all members of the inspection and plans review staff.
- 67. Recommendation: The Building Official and Fire Marshal should actively monitor the status of both their Inspector's and Plans Reviewer's qualifications and establish a program to confirm they are accumulating the necessary CEUs to maintain their qualifications.

A critical component of an appropriate training program is the existence of a well-stocked technical library. Staff indicates they are generally satisfied with the content of their existing technical library with the exception that they would appreciate having access to a digital copy (e-codes) of the next set of Codes to be adopted. We support this request because we believe having a copy of the e-codes available can greatly facilitate code research based on word searches.

68. Recommendation: The Building Official should consider purchasing a copy of the e-codes appropriate for the jurisdiction in conjunction with adoption of the new State mandated codes in 2013.

We understand that, due to budget constraints, the City may need to curtail outside training expenditures; however, we believe that 2% of this function's personnel budget should be set aside for annual supervisory training and other training of employees. In addition, employees should continually receive in-house training and mentoring from supervisors and other designated trainers. We typically suggest that 5% of staff's time be devoted to training.

69. Recommendation: The budget for the Fire and Building Department should include a line item for on-going technical code and supervisory training for Department staff equivalent to 2% of the Department's annual personnel budget, so that all staff can receive training appropriate for their positions.

Neither the Building Division nor Fire Prevention Bureau conduct weekly in-house training sessions for their inspection, plan review or permit technician staff. Conducting weekly training sessions typically provides an opportunity for staff to share their experiences gained while conducting field inspections, performing plan reviews or processing permits. This sharing process contributes to more consistent interpretations among the staff. Weekly training sessions are particularly important when a new set of codes are adopted every three years. Tracking these training sessions gives supervisors the opportunity to confirm that all appropriate subjects are being covered during training and helps ensure that all staff has had access to the training. In addition, a specific training program for new employees is essential to establish not only a basic understanding of the technical code requirements enforced by the City, but also as a means of determining if new employees are familiar with the policies, regulations, and procedures unique to the jurisdiction.

70. Recommendation: The Fire Marshal and Building Official should ensure that all inspection, plans examination and permit technician staff participate in some form of a weekly training session that is recorded for both subject matter and attendance. Opportunities to lead the classes should be given to all staff as a means of encouraging the development of technical expertise and identifying staff for potential future promotional opportunities.

In addition to the technical training needed to ensure continued competency within the individual discipline, there appears to be an immediate need for additional basic supervisory training for managers and supervisors. While employees seem to "like" their supervisors, upon closer review, they frequently cite examples of problems that are indicative of a supervisor's failure to understand and/or perform the basic responsibilities of their position. As stated elsewhere in this report, the lack of performance standards, work product audits and failure to administer performance evaluations tends to encourage a wide range of employee performance. Inevitably, this leads employee's to feel there is an inconsistent or unfair distribution of workload

and breeds concerns of favoritism. It is our understanding that the Human Resources Department has recently launched a Manager/Supervisor Training Program. We strongly support this effort.

71. Recommendation: The Director of Fire and Building should strongly encourage full participation by all of his Managers and Supervisors in Human Resources' recently initiated Manager/Supervisor Training Program.

D. POLICY AND REGULATION ISSUES

Codes

The City of Kirkland is required to enforce the minimum standards adopted in the Washington State Building Code. The State is currently enforcing the 2009 editions of the various building related codes. It is anticipated that the State will move to adopt the 2012 editions of the codes in July 2013. Ensuring that staff and the building community are aware of the impending changes to the codes should be a priority for the Building Official. Securing an adequate number of copies of the new codes and beginning the process of training staff to be familiar with the new requirements should begin as soon as practical. As the enforcement date approaches, the Building Official should also initiate a public education program for local builders and homeowners to alert them to the new provisions of the codes and how they will be interpreted for local enforcement. With the adoption of the new codes, a review of current customer handouts should be undertaken to confirm they do not conflict with the new code provisions. This would also be an appropriate time to develop additional customer handouts to draw attention to provisions specific to the new codes and make other handout suggestions covered in other parts of this report.

- 72. Recommendation: The Building Official should immediately secure sufficient copies of the 2012 editions of the various codes anticipated to be adopted by the State of Washington.
- 73. Recommendation: The Building Official should begin developing a comprehensive training program to familiarize the inspection and plans reviewer staff with those requirements that will be changed with the adoption of the new codes. The Department should continue to participate in the Annual WABO Education Week.
- 74. Recommendation: The Building Official should develop a public education program to familiarize local builders with the new provisions of the codes and how they will be interpreted for local enforcement.

75. Recommendation: The Building Official should review all existing customer handouts to confirm the information is consistent with newly adopted codes and generate additional handouts that will assist the customers in transitioning to the new codes.

E. PROCESSING ISSUES

Building/Fire Permits Counter

The Building Permits counter is staffed by a Permit Technician Supervisor, Permit Technicians (4.08 FTEs) and an Office Technician. The group's primary responsibility is to receive and process permit applications and provide general and applicable technical information to the public. Duties include initial review of applications and plans to determine completeness, calculation of permit fees and routing of permits to appropriate departments. This is but one of many counters that open on to the main pedestrian lobby. The Planning counter and the Public Works counter are also adjacent to this main lobby but are operated separately. The Building counter is located immediately adjacent to the main entrance to City Hall and therefore receives numerous general inquires unrelated to building permits, particularly when the general reception desk at the main lobby is not staffed

The Building Permit Technicians are the group most seriously impacted by the introduction of the EnerGov permitting system. In comparison with the previous computer permitting system, the new system is estimated to take two times longer to process a permit. While efforts are continuing to be made to improve the performance of the system, there are steps that should be taken to minimize the adverse impact on staff. There is currently no procedures manual available to staff to assist them in operating the system. The supervisor has encouraged each individual to create their own set of procedures as they attempt to learn how to operate the system. This approach can lead to considerable inconsistencies in the data entered into the system and adversely affect the quality of the reports subsequently obtained from the system. This process does not reflect a sound use of resources. If the supervisor does not have the technical skills to prepare a comprehensive procedures manual or is not sufficiently familiar with the operation of the system then we recommend that a single individual be selected and charged with the responsibility to prepare the needed Manual. While the agreement authorizing the filling of the Permit Technician Supervisor position stipulated that the Supervisor would work approximately 25% of the time at the public counter that is not how the position is currently being utilized.

76. Recommendation: The Building Official should designate an individual to create a comprehensive procedure manual for issuing permits in the EnerGov system. The individual should be given temporary out-of-class pay and at least partially relieved of their normal assignments in order to complete this task.

77. Recommendation: The Building Official should direct the Permit Technician Supervisor to assist at the public counter approximately 25% of the time and to become thoroughly familiar with the EnerGov system.

The Permit Counter also issues fire related permits and is staffed by an Office Technician that is part of the Fire Administrative Support Group. During staff interviews an issue was raised regarding the apparent lack of backup for the Fire Office Technician during her absence or during times of peak counter activity. Evidently the backup is provided by Building Division staff but this appears to need to be clarified and enforced.

78. Recommendation: The Deputy Fire Chief/Administration should take steps to ensure that administrative staff has the capability to provide Permit Counter backup.

Fire Prevention Bureau Activities

There is currently very limited oversight of the daily activities of the Fire Prevention Bureau staff, which has generated complaints from other staff about difficulty in contacting staff for assistance during normal business hours. As stated elsewhere in this report, the extensive use of flex time without a commensurate employee status reporting system in place has generated frustration for other staff members. In addition, there is currently no established set of employee performance standards in place; no periodic field audits of employee performance and performance evaluations are not routinely conducted. We have earlier recommended employee evaluations for all Development Services employees.

- 79. Recommendation: The Fire Marshal should meet with staff to establish employee performance standards for each position based on their job description.
- **80.** Recommendation: The Fire Marshal should establish a comprehensive inspection-auditing program that includes ride-alongs, independent site visits by the Fire Marshal and a post-final inspection customer satisfaction survey.

The Director of Fire and Building has indicated a concern about the lack of formal enforcement tools available for Fire Prevention Inspectors to utilize to encourage compliance with Fire Code regulations. It is generally believed that the Code Enforcement staff in the Planning and Community Development Department routinely uses enforcement tools that are not currently available to the Fire Prevention Bureau staff.

81. Recommendation: The Fire Marshal should work with the City Attorney and the Code Enforcement staff from Planning and Community Development to expand the number of code enforcement tools that can be utilized by Fire Prevention staff to encourage compliance.

Fire Inspection/Tracking System. The Fire Prevention Bureau and Fire Engine Companies are currently developing and testing the "New World" software program to enter the results of fire inspections. Staff reports that this program was originally designed to meet the reporting needs of police departments. Police reporting systems are generally based on tracking individuals. Fire inspection and building inspection programs are traditionally based on information specific to an individual property site. It is understandable that the Fire Prevention Bureau chose to not immediately convert their inspection program to utilize the EnerGov System, however, over time, as the deficiencies of the EnerGov System are corrected, the Fire Prevention Bureau should consider utilizing the inspection components in the EnerGov System. Utilizing this EnerGov System will allow access to the vast amount of existing property related data currently in the system and allow for a more integrated approach to both inspections and permit issuance.

82. Recommendation: The Fire Prevention Bureau should consider converting its inspection tracking system to the EnerGov program in the future when the current systems deficiencies have been corrected.

Inspection Activities

Inspection Requests. Inspection requests are currently received in two different ways. Customers may enter inspection requests into the MyBuildingPermit.com system. However, these requests are then subsequently reentered by staff into the inspection module of the EnerGov System. This duplication of effort should be eliminated in favor of a system that automatically imports the inspection requests into the EnerGov System. The second option for receiving inspection requests is through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System that is directly connected to the EnerGov System. During the interview with the inspection staff we accessed the IVR system via telephone and went through the exercise of entering an inspection request. The program is both confusing and very cumbersome to operate due to the numerous menus options the requestor most pass through to reach their specific inspection request. There are no readily available short-cuts for experienced system users to employ to reduce the time they must take to complete the inspection request process. Customers have also complained about the limitations on the number of inspections that can be requested during the same call. If customers have more than three inspections to request for a property, they must start the process over for the remaining inspections. In addition, the system does not afford the requestor the option of leaving a message for the Inspector. This type of information can frequently be

critical to the successful completion of an inspection The Inspectors also report that the IVR system frequently enters inappropriate inspection requests or numerous duplicate inspection requests that require significant staff time to resolve. It is our understanding that the MyBuildingPermits.com (MPB) is expected to be expanded to include all inspections types and allow direct access for inspection requests into the EnerGov System in May, 2013.

83. Recommendation: The Building Official should work with the EnerGov Committee to encourage progress on resolving the current shortcomings of the IVR System and continue monitor progress toward having all inspection requests processed through the MyBuildingPermits.com interface in the future.

Inspection Consistency. We did not hear any complaints in Kirkland about inconsistent inspectors. However, this is a standard issue that we see in virtually all of our studies and a program should be in place to assure consistency as much as possible.. While in-house group training can contribute to increasing the knowledge of inspection staff and give the Building Official and Inspection Supervisor the opportunity to give specific direction on how the code should be interpreted in the field, this must be followed up with a comprehensive in-field audit program. Currently there is no such program in place. Such a program should consist of a periodic ride-along program whereby the Inspection Supervisor accompanies the inspector during a day of inspection activity and confirms performance against a standardized checklist of established performance standards. Deficiencies should be immediately identified and also noted as performance goals in future performance evaluations. The audit program should also include independent visits by the Inspections Supervisor to job sites to solicit feedback from construction site supervisors regarding the performance of the assigned inspector. These visits also afford the Supervising Inspector or his designee the opportunity to confirm that all required paperwork is on-site and properly completed to reflect the current status of the project. Due to an inherent reluctance by contractors to complain about an inspector while their project is still being inspected, the audit program should also include a component to mail a customer satisfaction survey form to contractors and homeowners after the project has received final inspection. This approach will not only provide the Building Official and Inspections Supervisor an opportunity to gather more reliable feedback regarding the performance of the inspector, but also can provide an opportunity for the permittee to provide valuable feedback and suggestions regarding the entire permitting process.

84. Recommendation: The Building Official should work with the Inspections Supervisor and inspection staff to establish a set of performance standards for evaluating inspector performance in the field.

- 85. Recommendation: The Inspections Supervisor should establish a comprehensive inspection-auditing program that includes ride-alongs, independent site visits by the Inspections Supervisor and a post-final inspection customer satisfaction survey.
- 86. Recommendation: The Inspections Supervisor should review all reports gathered during field audits and confirm that appropriate information from those reports is incorporated into employee performance evaluations as future performance goals.

Field Computers. The inspection staff currently use tablet computers in the field, however, the inspectors report that they have very limited capability and are in the process of being replaced with new field units. Providing staff with devices that will allow them to retrieve or update permit related information from the field is critical to their success. The Building Division is currently reviewing different types of field computer units to determine which type would be most appropriate for their use in the field (tablets, laptops, iPads, etc.). One of the benefits of using field computers is the ability to coordinate the issuance of correction notices while in the field. Currently not all inspectors are entering their correction notices into the EnerGov System. This inconsistency can lead to confusion for both the customer and other inspectors who may be asked to perform future inspections at that site. The replacement field units should include the capability to enter correction notices directly into the system and be printed out for the customer.

- 87. Recommendation: The existing tablet computers being used by the inspection staff should be replaced with new units that have complete and rapid access to the EnerGov System from the field.
- 88. Recommendation: The Inspections Supervisor should direct all inspectors to enter correction notices into the EnerGov Systems.

Plan Review

The most significant complaint identified from customer surveys and comments during Focus Group interviews was the excessive plan review turnaround times. The City has set performance standards for first review as shown in Table 10. The Table also shows actual review times. However, the latest data we obtained was for March 2012. Newer data is not yet available from the new EnerGov system. There are also performance standards for Green Permits consisting of three weeks for residential and five weeks for commercial projects.

Care must be taken in interpreting the data. Data is shown as averages, which can be very misleading. We recommend that the data systems be changed to report on the percent of applications that met the Goal with a desired performance of meeting the Goal for at least 90% or the projects.

In addition to the issue of meeting First Review Goals, the City sets but does not report timelines for any subsequent reviews. As such, the Total Review Avg. includes applicant time to review and as such may not be a good indicator. We believe performance standards should be set and measured for each review cycle.

89. Recommendation: The EnerGov system should be changed to set performance targets for each review cycle and report on the percentage of projects that meet the performance standard.

The City's First Review Goals were met for March 2012 for most residential items except for all three categories of single family as well as multi-family Additions/Alterations. However, only one of the seven Commercial and Tenant Improvement categories were met, and none of the mechanical, land surface modification or sign categories. These poor timelines would appear to work against the City Council's goals for economic development.

Table 10 Review Timelines, March 2012

Item	First Review Goal (weeks)	Building	Planning	Public Works	City First Review, Avg	Total Review, Avg.
Single Family						
New, regular	5	4.7	4.8	0.4	4.8	8.7
New, third party	3	1.9	2.2	1.6	2.2	2.9
AddAlt, Express	0.4	1.1	0.5	0	1.1	1.6
Add/Alt, Fast Track	2	2.1	2	1.3	2.1	3.5
Add/Alt, Regular	4	3.5	3.6	0.9	3.6	6.2
Total						
Mult-Family						
New, regular	10	0	0	0	0	0
Addition/Alteration, Express	0.4	0.6	0.4	1	1	1.1
Addition/Alteration, Fast Track	2	0	0	0	0	0
Addition/Alteration, Regular	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total						
Commercial, Public	& Indust.					
New, regular	10	10.6	11.1	0.1	11.1	26
Addition/Alteration, Express	0.4	0.7	0.7	0	0.7	0.9
Addition/Alteration, Fast Track	2	0	0	0	0	2.1
Addition/Alteration, Regular	3	4.9	4.7	3.1	4.9	2.1
Total						

Item	First Review Goal (weeks)	Building	Planning	Public Works	City First Review, Avg	Total Review, Avg.
Tenant Improveme	nt					
Tenant Improvement, Express	0.4	0.4	0.5	0	0.5	0.9
Tenant Improvement, Fast Track	2	2.6	2.6	0	2.6	2.9
Tenant Improvement, Regular	3	4.4	6.4	0.7	6.4	6.9
Total						
Mechanical						
Mechanical, Express	0.4	0.3	0.3	0	0.3	2.3
Mechanical, Fast Track	2	2	2	0	2	2.1
Mechanical, Regular	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total						
Land Surface Modification	4	1.5	3.7	32.7	32.7	38.8
Signs	2	0.4	1.6	0	1.6	3.7
Total, All Items						

The City target turnaround times are further adjusted for projects that meet specific requirements that typically involve being very small and simple in scope or are considered "green" projects. Additionally, applicants have the option of paying a surcharge to significantly reduce the normal plan review turnaround times. These turnaround times are not published on the City website or otherwise readily available as handout information to the permit applicants.

90. Recommendation: A table of target turnaround times needs to be developed and readily available to customers via the website and at the public counter.

Table 11 below reflects our recommended turnaround times for specific project types based on our understanding of the processing requirements specific to the City of

Kirkland. Since plans often may require more than one review cycle, we set different times for each cycle. Some of the City function have set revision times but these are not well known by all participants. This is Best Practice. As a rule of thumb, we reduce the time in half for each cycle.

Table 11 Recommended Plan Check Times

	City's First Cycle Target	Recommended Times Second Third			
Item	Times	First Cycle	Cycle	Cycle	
New SFD residential	6 weeks	3 weeks	1½ weeks	4 days	
construction	(5?)	(2 weeks) (1 week)		(2 days)	
		4 weeks			
New Multi-Family	10 weeks	(3weeks)	2 weeks	1 week	
		2 weeks	1 week	3 days	
Residential remodels	4 weeks	(1 week)	(3 days)	(2 days)	
New commercial construction, less than		4 weeks			
\$1,000, 000 valuation	10 weeks	(3 weeks)	2 weeks	1 week	
New commercial construction, more than		5 weeks			
\$1,000, 000 valuation	10 weeks	(4 weeks)	3 weeks	2 weeks	
		2 weeks	1 week	3 days (2 days)	
Tenant improvements	3 weeks (5?)	(1 week)	(3 days)		
Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing	3 weeks	4 days (3 days)	2 days (1 day)	1 day	
Land Surface Modification	4 weeks	3 weeks (2 weeks)	2 weeks (1 week)	1 week (3 days)	
Signs	2 weeks	1 week (3 days)	3 days (2 days)	1 day	

As can be observed from the table above, we believe the turnaround times for all types of projects should be substantially reduced. It should be also noted that the table above includes establishing time frames for second and third reviews (i.e., rechecks) that are significantly less than the original review periods. In a number of cases we are recommending timelines longer than we feel are desirable but likely necessary as a

first step. In some cases a shorter timeline is shown in parentheses, which could be a longer-term goal.

We understand that there will need to be some process and possible staff changes in order to meet these timelines. Our approach to meeting timelines is described in Chapter I of this report. Adopting these new standards would help address the single most frequently expressed complaint about the City's development review services.

91. Recommendation: The City should adopt the target turnaround times identified in Table 11.

As identified above, the City has established overall plan review turnaround target times; however, these times are excessive with at least one Department reportedly frequently missing even these target dates. Staff reports that the plan reviews conducted by the Fire, Building and Public Works staff are consistently completed prior to the deadlines, while the Planning Department frequently fails to meet the target dates. Staff indicates that this occurs most frequently with those projects that require Planning review and sign-off by a Planner working on advanced planning projects. A recommendation to address this issue can be found in the Planning section of the report.

All processes need what we generally refer to as project managers. The Plans Examiners have been designated as the project managers for building permits; however, they have not been performing the full scope of the responsibilities of a project manager. A true project manager monitors timelines, intercedes and problem solves when necessary, and helps resolve any conflicts between reviewers. The Building Official indicates that the Plan Reviewers have this responsibility. However, this assignment is not clear to either the plan reviewers or the reviewers from other functions. It is apparent that the Plans Examiners have not received specific training on the role of the project manager and this role has also not been clearly communicated to other staff that participate in the development review process. There are a variety of ways other communities' handle this issue including assigning it to a planner, or special staff that function only as project manages. This later approach generally adds to the cost. We suggest that the City proceed with the Building Officials suggestion that the Plan Reviewers assume project management responsibility.

- 92. Recommendation: The City should clarify that the Building Plan Reviews have the role of being project managers for all building and fire reviews.
- 93. Recommendation: The role of the building permit project manager must be clearly communicated to staff that participate in the development review process.

Express Permits and Fast Track Permits

Express Permit and Fast-Track permits were introduced in 2001 in order to segregate the less complex permits so that they could be reviewed more quickly.

- Express Permits, such as rooftop appurtenances, tenant improvements, basic decks, single family first floor additions, and ground mounted mechanical units, are permits that are intended to be issued in three (3) working days or less.
- Fast-Track Permits are intended to be issued within ten (10) working days or less. Typical Fast-Track permits include new single family homes, more complex single family additions or garages under 500 square feet and other small projects, such as decks, sheds, repair/maintenance projects in or near sensitive areas that are exempt from the State Environmental Policy Act. In addition, complex rooftop appurtenances, rockeries and retaining walls up to 8 feet tall, tenant Improvements up to 5,000 square feet without a change in use, slab on grade greenhouse additions under 500 square feet and single family outdoor swimming pools.

Staff interviewed indicated that they are generally able to perform the reviews of Express and Fast-Track Permits within the review timeframes, and that the process works well.

Expedited Review and Priority Reviews

In 2003, the City initiated a new program for single-family dwellings to allow builders to pay an additional review fee (~ \$1,700) in exchange for an expedited review process. Builder's that elect to pay for expedited review are guaranteed first review comments from the building and planning departments for their Building Permit within fifteen (15) working days, compared to six weeks for the normal review process.

Interviews with staff indicated that the City no longer hires outside planning and building consultants to perform expedited reviews. Rather the plans are routed to inhouse Building Plan Reviewers and Assistant Planners to conduct the reviews through over-time. Since these staff members are eligible for over-time compensation, a portion of the expedited review fees is utilized to defray the over-time costs associated with plan review. However, these staff members do not always have the capacity in their workload to complete expedited reviews and salaried employees are not assigned expedited review work as a backup because they do not receive the over-time compensation.

Staff indicated that they explored the option of eliminating the expedited fee, and balancing out fees and timelines across the board to provide faster overall service during the last fee update. However, the City decided to maintain the expedited fee and review program.

We prefer that cities have an expedited review option for builders and often recommend to those cities that don't have such as program to establish one. Expedited reviews can be particularly useful for Kirkland given customers concerns related to slow timelines. Additionally, since there may be a reluctance to raise fees for normal processing, expedited reviews lets the customer decide if they want pay the extra fee.

Given staffing issues, it is likely that most expedited reviews would need to be completed by consultants. There are a variety of ways cities have handled these reviews including:

- Finding consultants willing to perform the reviews at a percentage of the normal review cost, often 60 to 80% with the remaining fee available to handle city overhead.
- Having a fixed additional fee, similar to Kirkland's fees for Single Family houses.
- Charging the normal fee but then adding on all the consultants' costs.
- It should be noted that the expedited fee would need to cover costs for all the review agencies.

94. Recommendation: The City should have an aggressive expedited plan review process, and set the fees in consultation with the industry.

In order to make an expedited program truly workable, the timelines need to be substantially below the normal plan review timelines. We suggest the timelines shown in Table 12 below.

Table 12 Suggested Expedited Plan Review Times

	City's First	Recommended Times				
I to me	Cycle Target Times	First Cycle	Second Cycle	Third Cycle		
Item	Times	First Cycle	Cycle	Cycle		
New SFD residential						
construction	6 weeks	1 week	3 days	2 days		
l			l			
New Multi-Family	10 weeks	2 weeks	1 weeks	3 days		
Residential remodels	4 weeks	1 week	3 days	2 days		
Now commonsial						
New commercial construction, less than						
\$1,000, 000 valuation	10 weeks	2 weeks	1 weeks	3 days		
	TO WCCKS	Z WCCK3	1 WCCK3	5 day 5		
New commercial						
construction, more than			l, .	l		
\$1,000, 000 valuation	10 weeks	2 weeks	1 week	1 day		
			2 4010	2 days		
Tenant improvements	3 weeks (5?)	1week	3 days	2 days		
Tonant improvements	O WEEKS (U:)	TWEEK				
Electrical, Mechanical			1 days			
and Plumbing	3 weeks	2 days		1 day		
Lond Conford		4	4 -1	2 -1		
Land Surface Modification	4 weeks	1 week	4 days	3 days		
iviounication	4 WEEKS					
Signs	2 weeks	2 dove	2 days	1 day		
Signs	∠ weeks	3 days	2 days	i day		

95. Recommendation: Expedited plan review times should be set as shown in Table 12.

Plan Review Hours

Currently Plans Examiner assignments are being tracked on a separate Excel Spreadsheet maintained by the Plan Review Supervisor. The hours allocated for plan review on this sheet are not truly related to the expected duration of the plan check, but rather based on the fee collected. There is currently no specific set of guidelines being used to assign individual projects based on the anticipated time needed to complete the plan review. The spreadsheet also does not include a significant number

of the plan reviews actually being performed by staff and is therefore not a complete picture of the actual Plans Examiners' workload. A major selling point of computer based permit tracking software is the ability to closely measure the plan review workload in order to help ensure an appropriate balance between Plans Examiners and the total plan review workload. In many cases, this type of information is also essential to the successful completion of a comprehensive permit fee study. Such information helps provide a "nexus" between the amounts of time staff spends processing a permit and the fee appropriate to recover the cost for that staff time. The EnerGov system should have the capability to provide this level of detailed staff time tracking. In the interim period, staff should at least create a short-term alternative time tracking log to gather this type of information.

- **96.** Recommendation: The EnerGov Committee should direct EnerGov to provide a comprehensive plan review tracking module that will allow tracking of individual plans examiner project completions.
- 97. Recommendation: The Plan Review Supervisor should direct the plan review staff to utilize a project tracking log to record the amount of time they spend performing plan reviews on each project.
- 98. Recommendation: The Plan Review Supervisor should utilize the information from the Plans Examiner tracking logs to help ensure that the total workload is appropriately balanced between all Plans Examiners.

Plans Examination

The current Plan Review Supervisor has been employed by the City of Kirkland for 11 years, and been in the position of Plan Review Supervisor for seven years. As the Plan Review Supervisor, he is responsible for supervising the plans examiners, organizing and prioritizing work activities, providing technical guidance and coordinating the plan review needs of permit applicants and staff in other Divisions and Departments. Per the Job Description, this position is required to have a thorough knowledge of current building, residential, plumbing, mechanical and general construction codes as well as a working knowledge of electrical, carpentry, concrete, mechanical and plumbing work. This position and the other four (4) plans examiners perform plan review for all types of construction, except electrical. At this time the electrical plan reviews are performed by the Electrical/Building Inspectors due to the State requirement that electrical reviews must be conducted by individuals that are licensed as Journeyman Electricians. Currently commercial plans are reviewed by the Plan Review Supervisor and two Plans Examiner IIs while residential and small commercial tenant improvements are performed by the other Plans Examiner II and the Plans Examiner I. All Plans Examiners are required to be ICC Certified as Plans Examiners. Overall, staff appears to be qualified to perform the types of plan reviews that are typically submitted to the City. In addition, the Plan Review Supervisor has the ability to retain outside professional engineers to review the occasional highly complex project. This Section is anticipated to hire an additional plans examiner in January 2013 to address increased workload.

- 99. Recommendation: In hiring a new Plans Examiner position, the Building Official should consider seeking an applicant with qualifications that not only meet the minimum of ICC Commercial Plans Examiner Certification but would also have electrical qualifications that satisfy the State Law.
- 100. Recommendation: Projects involving significant structural design or complex plumbing/mechanical/electrical systems should be reviewed by an in-house plans reviewer with appropriate qualifications in that specific field or the plan review should be contracted out to a firm with qualified staff to perform those services.

Key indicators for measuring the effectiveness of a plan review operation is the quality of the plan review and the quantity of plans reviewed. The quality of plan review is frequently measured by the degree to which similar plans are reviewed in a consistent and uniform manner by the Plans Examiners. A traditional method used to help advance completeness and accuracy for plan reviews is the implementation of a periodic audit program. The City of Kirkland does not currently employ a program to periodically audit the performance of the plans examiners.

- 101. Recommendation: The Building Official should work with the Plan Review Supervisor to establish a set of performance standards for evaluating Plans Examiner performance.
- 102. Recommendation: The Plan Review Supervisor should establish a comprehensive Plans Review auditing program that includes periodic review of completed plan reviews performed by both in-house staff and any reviews that may be conducted by outside consultants.
- 103. Recommendation: The Plan Review Supervisor should review all reports gathered during the plan review audits and confirm that appropriate information from those reports is incorporated into employee performance evaluations as future performance goals.

To maintain consistency in interpretations and to aid in the orientation of new employees, it is essential to have a set of written procedures in the form of a manual. At this time the Plan Review Section does not have a Procedures Manual for employee use.

104. Recommendation: The Plan Review Supervisor should create a comprehensive Plan Review Procedures Manual to provide guidance for both existing employees and new hires.